

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health

A Decade of Progress (1990-2000)

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Background

The Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), established in September 1990 within the Office of the Director, NIH, (a) advises the NIH Director and staff on matters relating to research on women's health; (b) strengthens and enhances research related to diseases, disorders, and conditions that affect women; (c) ensures that research conducted and supported by NIH adequately addresses issues regarding women's health; (d) ensures that women are appropriately represented in biomedical and biobehavioral research studies supported by NIH; (e) develops opportunities for and supports recruitment, retention, re-entry, and advancement of women in biomedical careers; and (f) supports research on women's health issues. ORWH works in partnership with the NIH institutes and centers to ensure that women's health research is part of the scientific framework at NIH and throughout the scientific community.

Research on Women's Health for the 21st Century

ORWH convened a series of four meetings across the country to examine and revise the NIH scientific agenda on women's health research. The scientific workshops examined progress achieved in research, identified continuing or emerging issues and gaps in knowledge, developed new models for the design and conduct of research studies, and recommended how findings of such research could best be integrated into the education and training of health care providers and translated into sex and gender-appropriate models of health care. Recommendations from these meetings are published in the ORWH report, "Agenda for Research on Women's Health for the 21st Century." *

Overarching Themes for Women's Health Research 2000:

- Implementation of recommendations from the "Agenda for Research on Women's Health for the 21st Century," as framework upon which to expand and initiate studies for sex and gender or population comparisons and analyses in basic molecular, biological, behavioral, and clinical research.
- Studies that address females across the life span as research subjects, especially those traditionally under-represented in clinical research.
- Multidisciplinary basic, clinical and behavioral research in women's health on conditions that may be chronic and multisystemic.
- Integration of chemical, mathematical, and physical with biological sciences in research on women's health.

The following research priorities for FY 2000 are meant to be fully inclusive, but to reflect areas deserving of new or expanded investigative efforts.

Comprehensive ORWH Priorities for Women's Health Research 2000

- ❖ Prevention of chronic diseases
- ❖ Tobacco and alcohol use and lung cancer
- ❖ Complementary and alternative medicines and dietary supplements
- ❖ Kidney and urologic health
- ❖ Bases for sex differences in pharmacology
- ❖ Cancer
- ❖ Cardiovascular diseases
- ❖ Musculoskeletal injuries, disorders & diseases
- ❖ Neuroendocrine disorders & diseases
- ❖ Allergic, immune and autoimmune diseases
- ❖ Reproductive health, including both pregnancy and non-pregnancy issues
- ❖ STDs and other infections
- ❖ Gastrointestinal disorders
- ❖ Mental health disorders
- ❖ Violence and trauma
- ❖ Caregiving and quality of life for women
- ❖ Chronic multisystemic diseases
- ❖ Sex and gender differences in pain conditions

ORWH is working in partnership with the NIH institutes and centers to implement recommendations and priorities from this report. The agenda seeks to expand and initiate studies for sex and gender or population comparisons; emphasize multidisciplinary collaboration in basic, clinical, epidemiological and behavioral research; and focus on special populations of women.

ORWH does not have direct funding authority; ORWH implements its research objectives by funding and co-funding research in collaboration with the NIH institutes and centers, sponsoring research planning conferences on women's health, developing new research initiatives, and supporting research projects through the Research Enhancement Awards Program.

* For a copy of the report, call 301-496-8176 or visit the ORWH website.

NIH Mandate for the Inclusion of Women and Minorities in Clinical Research

ORWH, established in response to public and Congressional concerns about the lack of inclusion of women in clinical research, has a leadership role in administering and monitoring the NIH inclusion policies for women and minorities in human subject research. The NIH policies for inclusion were strengthened in response to the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-43), which added modifications to ensure that women and minorities and their subpopulations are included in all human subject research.

ORWH, with a legislative mandate, ensures the inclusion of women as subjects in clinical research and implementation of a database to track the inclusion of women and minorities in NIH-supported research studies through a computerized tracking system. NIH aggregate data are available to document the numbers of women and minorities included in clinical research. Analysis of NIH-wide demographic data on subjects enrolled in clinical research studies show substantial numbers of both women and minorities have been included as research subjects. The ICs are in compliance with the policy for inclusion*, and monitoring through an NIH-wide tracking committee continues.

Career Development for Women Scientists

One of the major objectives of ORWH is to develop and support opportunities for recruitment, retention, re-entry, and advancement of women in biomedical careers. ORWH sponsored a public hearing and workshop on women in biomedical careers to identify obstacles to women's participation in research careers and to formulate strategies and programs for overcoming barriers. A report emanating from this effort, *Women in Biomedical Careers: Dynamics of Change; Strategies for the 21st Century*, continues to serve as the basis for ORWH activities to address the third part of the office mandate. ORWH has undertaken a number of activities to increase opportunities for women in biomedical careers, including the following:

- **Building Inter disciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health** - ORWH developed this RFA, in conjunction with many ICs and AHRQ, an institutional career development mentored award for junior faculty members who recently completed clinical training or postdoctoral fellowships and are commencing basic, translational, clinical or health services research relevant to women's health.
- **Transitional Career Development Award in Women's Health Research** - This RFA was developed by ORWH and many ICs to support career development experiences leading to independence for clinical investigators interested in patient-oriented or population-based research related to women's health. Investigators develop solid clinical research skills during two years of study and intramural research at NIH and two years of extramural research at an academic institution.
- **Women's Reproductive Health Research Career Development Centers** - ORWH joined NICHD in developing and funding institutional career awards for Women's Reproductive Health Research Career Development Centers. To date, ORWH supports 20 centers.

- **Professional Opportunities for Women in Research and Education (POWRE)** - ORWH has had an ongoing inter-agency collaboration since FY 1997 with the National Science Foundation to encourage the pursuit of research careers in basic science by women investigators in biomedical sciences.
- **WHI Minority Investigator Career Development Award** ORWH co-sponsored an RFA with NIAMS and NIA to provide Career Development Awards (K01 or K08) to minority scientists to facilitate their participation as investigators in the Women's Health Initiative.
- **ORWH's Re-entry Program** - The ORWH Re-entry Program was developed in 1992 as a pilot program to help fully trained scientists (women and men) reestablish careers in biomedical or behavioral science after taking time off to care for children or parents, or to attend to other family responsibilities. This program is now supported by all NIH institutes.

ORWH Initiatives with the Office of Science Education

- **Video and Poster Series** - ORWH is supporting the development of a "Women are (Surgeons, Pathologists, and Researchers)," video and poster series, featuring professional women who perform basic research, clinical research and applied medical practice. The series is designed for students from middle school through college. "Women Are Surgeons" has been completed and distributed.
- **Speakers Bureau** - A website has been designed to increase national visibility of NIH research scientists and clinicians who are available to speak to schools and organizations about medical research at NIH. The speakers are diverse in their fields of expertise, gender, race, and ethnic backgrounds.
- **Health Science Curriculum Online** - ORWH and OSE have developed an interactive website targeting students in grade 7-12 centered on women and minority issues. Health topics center on diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer with two stories on each disease. Incorporated into the stories is information of special interest to Latinos, Native Americans, and African Americans.

ORWH Initiatives with the Office of Education

- **Career Development Workshop Series** - Featured topics in FY 1999 included job hunting, negotiations, oral presentations, and writing and publishing.
- **Science Communication Courses** - To assist young scientists who may have limited experience writing scientific papers for publication and giving scientific talks, ORWH supports two science communication courses to develop these essential skills, "Writing About Sciences" and "Speaking About Science."

ORWH Women's Health Seminar Series

The 2000 Women's Health Seminar Series marks the 10th anniversary of ORWH and a decade of progress in women's health research. Nationally recognized leaders in women's health research present the latest information on topics important to women's health. Seminars are free and open to the public.

February 17, 2000	AIDS
June 15, 2000	Diabetes
September 21, 2000	Stress
December 7, 2000	Heart and Brain Attacks